

Town Centre Masterplan Early Engagement 23 June to 8 July 2011

Key Points

Public event 23 June

- Use river (for example river taxi) – underused resource
- Reduce traffic in town, don't encourage more traffic with more development
- Cars dominate the townscape in most areas and a large number of potential redevelopment sites, particularly along the River Wey are car parks
- Need underground parking
- Subsidise public transport, re-introduce shuttle bus (especially important for people who cannot climb the High Street), have car-share scheme
- Traffic system, traffic management and gyratory needs sorting out
- Traffic light phasing creates tailbacks
- Make gyratory two-way
- Route from station to town (bus station and shops) along river needs improving, has lots of potential
- Improve linkages to west and university
- Suggest no bus station, but bus stand hubs in Guildford station and in North Street

- Modern flagship architecture integrated with historic buildings
- Give sufficient importance to historic assets, views (including to countryside)
- Aspire to historic towns like Bath, Exeter, Oxford, Cambridge rather than economic ones like Reading, Woking
- Consider European-style square / plaza for North Street or bottom of High Street, with restaurants/cafes for people to relax whilst shopping, and for kids to play
- "Green" buildings designed to minimise climate change
- Have enough chain shops, don't need more. Give more support to independent shops
- Rents are too high
- Reduced or fixed rents for small retailers, especially those selling food. The whole town is far too full of chains.
- Visitors won't come if there are only multiple chain stores
- Need to get retail offer to change to later opening (7 to 8pm). Business closes 5.30. It's like a ghost town unless you want dinner

- Concern about concentration of drinking places around Bridge Street
- Develop night time economy with quality facilities at top end of town near residential areas and G Live
- Reintroduce (Arts) cinema back at the old Constitution Hall, 170 High Street
- Keep young artists in Guildford with more opportunities for them

- Need more attractive affordable housing with gardens for children and places for children to play
- Bring empty properties back in use (including above shops)
- Town Centre flats (including luxury) near facilities for older people who don't drive

- Should consider sites and improvements in overall strategy, not in isolation from each other
- Build on strengths of town centre, including river; extend riverside walk, more restaurants, etc with housing above along riverside
- Link the river with the town. The road between river and High Street is a barrier
- More public conveniences and open later
- Remove the two tower blocks visible from town

- Better paving
- Need more markets
- Focus on Guildford's unique heritage and natural setting (river, hilly topography and connecting alleyways, not on purely its economic potential)
- More public art needed
- Remove the two flats and office buildings that bridge over Millbrook

Electronic response forms, emails and letters

Guildford should build an imaginative plan based on its assets –

- Its downland setting, historic buildings, monuments, conservation areas, and street layouts in certain localities (including the Castle), prosperity, the River Wey and Godalming Navigations, significant retail destination, and a key office/employment location

However,

- Much of physical fabric away from the central core is uninspiring
- Large areas of under-utilised land, many used for temporary surface car parking. Nearly all of the sites are in premium spots where the land could better be used for commercial or housing development. Much is owned by the Council.
- A number of very ugly buildings along the riverbank (Odeon Cinema, Friary shopping centre, Debenhams, the rear of the shops along the A281) which detract from the riverside largely because they don't have any windows in them. All you see is walls of brick and concrete.
- Challenges from other towns including Woking, Kingston, Camberley
- Empty out-dated offices available, due to out-dated construction (1960s and '70s). These are not what most firms want
- Guildford lacks a number of key facilities in town centre; hotels, student accommodation, convenience shopping aimed at commuters, general housing, sport and leisure.

Great Opportunities –

- Train station redevelopment
- Improve pedestrian route between rail station and shops avoiding using Bridge Street and crossing Onslow Street
- To grow economically through the introduction of a new Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP),
- For a Business Improvement District (BID) to enhance North Street (including consideration of its full or partial pedestrianisation), the Friary centre and extension site and surrounding streets to integrate it more with the High Street
- New retail anchor developments
- Under-utilised sites offer potential for modern “eco” buildings to attract businesses, including head offices available to incoming companies
- Develop town centre as an area of focus for technology industries

- A visionary plan is needed to give everyone something to aspire to
- An international competition should be held to select a leading town planner or masterplanner

- The town centre boundary should not cut through the Castle area, it should include the Castle and the site of Guildford Palace
- Town Centre boundary should extend northwards to Dapdune Wharf and Cricket ground and industrial area. Dapdune Wharf is a focal point on the River Wey and is significant heritage/cultural/leisure and community asset

- Over one fifth of respondents did not agree with the proposed boundary (therefore small amendments to it will be considered)
- Use of the term 'historic remnants' a Townscape Type may imply that these are 'the bits left over' and presents a rather negative image of these areas. Rename this area and make them priority areas for investment with innovative/creative design solutions
- Use infrastructure contributions or Community infrastructure Levy to realise enhancement of riverside
- Make sure redevelopment of sites near river enhances pedestrian access and does not increase risk of flooding
- River Wey and Godalming Navigation passes directly through the heart of the Masterplan area. It is a highly significant heritage asset, of major townscape, recreation, amenity and biodiversity value. It is one of the most important features in the town centre with very significant potential to assist in the economic development and environmental enhancement of the area
- Make more of the riverside as an attractive asset, with planting and increased public access, rather than buildings turning their backs on it. Extend and improve the riverside walk. This can be facilitated by the number of potential redevelopment sites adjacent and close to the river
- Need to consider the river corridor as a whole in an integrated way (scale and design)
- Use river more, for recreation. Investigate river taxi from town centre going north
- Balance need for economic prosperity and required growth with protection/enhancement of its best assets and areas. Underutilised site and areas needing improvement can provide for the required new offices and retail.
- Relocate Debenhams (currently "off pitch") as a new anchor in the Friary extension site
- High rental values on High Street demonstrate its popularity and success, but this prohibits smaller independent businesses.
- Maintenance of public realm and its quality are important to the continuing success of Guildford town centre.
- Pavements/surfacing need improving, particularly important for visually impaired.
- New trees and landscaping need to be maintained, and funds need to be provided for this.
- The North St area needs sympathetic development. We cannot allow Westfield to slow things down.
- Gyratory and roads around the station needs attention to solve rush hour traffic congestion
- Need to take pressure off Farnham Road Bridge, changes to gyratory including closing Bridge Street to traffic.
- Need segregated and improved traffic circulation, with easy access to public transport and parking.
- Improve ease of access to town for those who shop and work there.
- Improve environment for cycling and walking.
- Need better pedestrian and cycle routes from the University campus to the town centre, railway and bus stations
- Residents parking should apply during all shopping hours, including Sundays.
- Car parks should be cheaper and road made more expensive to clear the streets of cars.
- It is difficult to find parking spaces during weekend shopping peak hours.
- A traffic solution is needed to stop the town centre being cut off from the river.
- Bus station is in a convenient location for shoppers and workers, but it has an impact on the retail development that can be achieved. A suitable alternative location must be agreed before the Friary extension can proceed.

- Relocating the bus station to any site west of Onslow Street would have serious consequences for the traffic flow in Onslow Street and/or the gyratory, as the current timetable has 70 buses per hour leaving the existing bus station during the pm rush period.
- Relocate bus station to former Farnham Road bus station/Portsmouth Road car park to free up prime real estate in a prime location that is preventing retail expansion of the town centre and therefore improvement of North Street and its economic growth.
- New bridge over river between Walnut Tree Close and Leas Rd site would improve pedestrian permeability
- Greater pedestrianisation in area and in time, including North Street. When the roads are open, have lower speed limit
- Town centre housing needed for elderly. Luxury flats with balconies for elderly people could provide housing for older people how no longer drive. This may free up large, less central houses for families, and could enable town centre affordable housing.
- More residential accommodation along the river frontage-notwithstanding the Environment Agency's cautious approach.
- Need a day centre for elderly people in the town centre.
- Need more places for under-18s to go, more green play areas for children.
- Diversify the evening economy for all ages.
- Focus on cultural assets
- A clear role for all parts of the centre is required.
- For example, developing the leisure and tourism offer as a cluster in certain parts of the town centre. This would ensure a critical mass and exploit the character of the town centre for tourists.
- All heritage assets need to be included and mapped, such as scheduled ancient monuments (SAMs) and archaeological areas, (see PPS5). The County Historic Environment Record (managed in the county council archaeology team), can provide the most accurate and detailed information as regards the precise layout of such sites around the town. The setting of potential development sites also needs to be considered in relation to historic assets.
- Important views across and out of the town centre must be protected.
- Enhancing co-location of public sector provision.
- Infrastructure needs to be considered, in particular schools, waste and transport. There is increasing pressure on local schools, and the only school within the proposed town centre boundary is Sandfield Primary, which has been oversubscribed for some years. Any increase in housing will increase unacceptable pressure on school places unless there is a commensurate increase in educational infrastructure.
- The County Council as Highway Authority for the area will continue to work with the borough, including on the “Local Sustainable Transport Fund”.
- A clear and realistic implementation strategy is needed identifying necessary actions from stakeholders
- Strategic decisions on commercial, environmental and transport objectives should precede decisions on any major Council sites.
- Not clear how potential development sites have been shortlisted. Make this explicit.
- Concerned that even at this early stage, the masterplan lacks a coherence approach of relevant sites being considered together, even those adjacent. Such a piecemeal approach will not secure

overall improvements to deficient areas of the town. A more proactive and coherent approach is required which identifies clusters of adjacent or nearby sites.

- Series of three masterplanning sketches and four artist impressions submitted by architect/urban designer firm to promote comprehensive consideration of Bedford Road surface car park and surrounding sites.
- Concerned about the lack of formal status of the masterplan. As it will not form part of the Local Development Framework (neither DPD nor SPD), the emerging draft should clarify the document's status, and identify any weight that might be attached to it for decision making purposes.
- Masterplan still needs to be based on sound evidence, including previous work on the TCAAP.
- As neither a DPD nor an SPD it will have very limited weight in the determination of planning applications. That will limit the extent to which the Council can use its planning powers to shape development. To address this recommend that, as far as possible, the aims and aspirations of the masterplan are incorporated within the emerging Core Strategy and Site Allocations and Development Control Policies DPD. In the short term, prior to the masterplan aspirations being reflected in planning policy, it is essential that all stakeholders 'buy in' to the masterplan so that the potential for implementation is maximised.

Sites

Site 1 Guildford Park Road car park

Housing; affordable housing ; link to university; underground parking; gateway between university and town

Site 2 Guildford railway station

Bus station here or good link to bus station; better links across the two sides of the station; multilevel parking to make better use of the site; better ticketing facilities

Site 3 Jewsons warehouse site; Walnut Tree Close

Housing with parking; as well as offices and residential, may also be suitable for other town centre uses; improve links westwards. Any noise/vibration could be mitigated by design.

Site 4 - 1 and 2 Station View

Opportunity for redevelopment to make more effective use of the site for offices and/housing. Many potential town centre uses could be suitable. New east-west bridge to improve linkages to these sites. Any noise/vibration could be mitigated by design.

Site 5 Land rear of 77-121 Walnut Tree Close

Cheap surface car park; new road bridge across river.

Site 6 Bus depot, Leas Road

Bus depot could be further out of town, unless bus station goes to Mary Road site, then keep it here.

Site 7 Pembroke House, Mary Road

Residential to improve appearance of site

Site 8 Mary Road car park

Underground car park, not multi-storey; could relocate bus station here.

Site 9 Bedford Road surface car park

Enhance riverside, cafes, shops, housing and an hotel with river-facing balconies. Pedestrianise Bridge Street and have new bridge over river to this site.

Site 10 Buildings north side of Bridge Street

Whole area needs improving, noisy area at night so mix uses; potential to link redevelopment with council-owned Bedford Road surface car park site;

Site 11 Land adjoining Electric Theatre

It is a well used area, just needs improving as an open space.

Site 12 former Farnham Road bus station/Portsmouth Road car park

Wasted space; create a public green riverside walk with trees and link up to existing riverside walks; a key site that has the potential to redefine Guildford town centre; site should face towards the river; ideal for an iconic building set back from the river.

Site 13 The Annex / Riverside, Friary Street

Community use for elderly and younger; community art gallery; include trees along riverbank.

Site 14 Guildford Plaza

Housing or flats with gardens; relocate council offices here to free up existing council offices for housing; mixed use commercial and housing.

Site 15 Debenhams

Prime riverside town centre site; improve riverside access, create path in front of building; improve river frontage, maybe use "green walls"; bulky and uninteresting building; the huge glass frontage is attractive; relocate store further into town (Friary centre extension?); restaurants on ground floor, flats above; move the road that cuts the town off from the river; a mixed use development would benefit from a waterfront and a town centre location.

Site 16 Millmead House and Old Millmead, Millmead

High value waterside site that was originally housing; excellent site for housing; convenient accessible location for public services.

Site 17 Millbrook surface car park

First impression of the town centre coming from the south; frontages to river and main road should enhance streetscape; low-rise multi-storey car park to be accessed from Quarry Street; underground parking with roof-top garden; no decking,

Site 18 Friary extension site

Create lanes, not huge monolith; its street scope and urban form should respond to local connectivity routes and not turn its back on existing roads and streets. when will it be redeveloped?; housing, not more shops; should not draw trade away from high Street; what are Westfield's plans?; until the Friary extension and the bus station issue are resolved, North Street stays in limbo; move bus station to train station; relocate Debenhams here with leisure uses; desirable to have larger public square than that approved and streets open for public use at all hours; desire by Westfield to redevelop the Town Centre Friary Centre 2, however other retail developers could also contribute to the expansion plans, assisted by the Council that has the ability to release the land.

Site 19 Bellerby theatre and North Place day centre

No need for more retail nor supermarkets that would generate more traffic; more luxury flats with balconies for elderly people needed in town centre;

Site 20 BT Telephone Exchange

Redevelop for housing, affordable housing and small shops.

Site 21 Leapale road car park North Street frontage and 15-17 Haydon Place

Keep car park or make it bigger

Site 22 Dolphin House, 1 to 6 North Street

Building should be redeveloped.

Site 23 Former basket works site

This old industrial building should be retained and improved; contributes to the historic roofscape of the area viewed from Bright Hill, and is sufficiently low to avoid obscuring the valuable roofscape of Trinity

Churchyard; surrounded by residential, so suitable use could be a modern indoor market, studio or residential.

Site 24 Bright Hill car park

Underground car parking with housing (as used to be); playground or green open space. On walking route from residential area to town, improve environment for pedestrians.

Site 25 Adult education Institute, Sydenham Road

Retain attractive locally listed Victorian buildings; housing or community use; some of the newer buildings could be removed and areas left as public open space; it's location is good to serve the residential area.

Site 26 London Square, Cross Lane

Residential; no shops

Site 27 Land and Building rear of 14-42 Chertsey Street

Enable Royal Grammar School to grow onto this site if there is demand rather than on older building across High Street.

Other sites

Bedford Road car park and buildings north side of Bridge Street

Take a comprehensive approach to redevelopment of these sites. Adjoining landowners are willing to work together to see a remarkable town centre/waterfront development on their land and council-owned land; new waterfront walk that leads down through to Millmead, a 6m wide boulevard and 4-5 story mixed-use development. This could be linked through to redevelopment of buildings close to Bedford Road multi-storey, including the Casino nightclub for retail and other commercial uses (such as computing/gaming industries), moving the "entertainment area" to London Rd to be near to "GLive"; potential redevelopment of the cinema to provide one that can compete with nearby towns. Improve crossing over the traffic lights along Onslow Road accessing directly into a new entrance into the Friary Centre, and towards North Street.

Better for uses and sites to be considered holistically, rather than in a site-by-site, piece-meal approach.

Tungate Square Shopping Centre

Owner is reviewing a range of options for the future of the shopping centre and to link these with opportunities through the masterplan.

Cavendish House (Bathstore), Sydenham Road

Negative impact on Conservation Area. Replace with lower building, possibly residential.

Riverside Business Centre, Walnut Tree Road

Included in the town centre area. Owner would like it to be considered for a range of possible alternative uses, including residential and town centre uses, subject to townscape, infrastructural and environmental capacity issues, in order to optimise the site's future development potential.